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STRESS, COPING, AND SOCIAL SUPPORTS

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by

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ABSTRACT

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In order to explore the effects of a social support system on individuals' abilities to manage stress, ninety-one female volunteers, ages twenty-five to forty-five, were assigned to four groups: a Consciousness-Raising group, an Assertiveness-Training group, a Rap group, and a no treatment Control group. Participants met in groups with the experimenter once a week for nine weeks. The participants in Group I, the Consciousness-Raising group, discussed a variety of topics which they characterized as being personally stressful. The approach in Group II, the Assertiveness-Training group, was behavioral or action-oriented. Group III, the Rap group, had no particular focus, and assumed an approach chosen by the participants. Group IV, the Control group, received no experimental treatment. All participants were tested during the ninth week of the study with six measures related to stress and coping: Lazarus and Cohen's Hassles Scale, J. B. Rotter's Locus of Control of Reinforcement Inventory, Spence, Helmreich, and Stapp's Attitudes toward Women Scale, Lazarus and Cohen's Uplifts Scale, Janis-Field's Feelings of Inadequacy Scale, and
Lazarus and Cohen's Ways of Coping Checklist.

One-way analyses of variance were performed on each of the dependent variables. Results revealed that the social support system had no effect (at the .05 level of significance) on the participants' management of stress as measured by the instruments employed in this study. Suggestions for future research were discussed.
STRESS, COPING AND SOCIAL SUPPORTS

INTRODUCTION

Stress! The September, 1978 PSA airliner crash over San Diego in which 144 people died; the instantaneous and graphic media coverage of the death of over 900 people in Guyana in November, 1978; the partial meltdown of a Pennsylvania nuclear power plant located at Three Mile Island in March, 1979; the rising incidents of rape and homicide; the high rates of divorce; the frequent third-stage smog alerts in Los Angeles; the controversial gasoline shortages and runaway inflation. Adversities such as these make us painfully aware of the stress which characterizes our daily lives.

Can we conceptualize stress as the external events themselves or is stress our internal response to the interpretation we give them? Can we learn to cope with stress or must we become its victims? Can systems of social support facilitate our coping? What research already exists which can further our understanding of stress and its impact on our lives and what further research can be done?

The General Adaptation Syndrome

Hans Selye, a noted endocrinologist, first outlined a description of the General Adaptation Syndrome, a view
of stress as a response to the environment (Selye, 1952). The General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS) is a three-stage response that the body appears to go through when its resources must be mobilized to meet situations which threaten the homeostatic condition of the organism. Stressors, the environmental events which threaten the organism, may consist of a wide array of conditions: injury, disease or emotional arousal. The GAS, thus, is a defensive physiological reaction, "a state manifested by a syndrome which consists of all nonspecifically induced changes in a biologic system" (Selye, 1977, p.6). The GAS consists of three stages: a first stage called the alarm reaction in which the body's defenses are rapidly called up; a second stage, the stage of resistance, in which the body tries to repair itself while continuing to react in an aroused manner; and a third stage in which all physiological functions slow down dramatically, sometimes even stopping altogether. Further exposure to stress at this time can lead to depression, emotional disability or even death. Selye believes that diseases like high blood pressure, arthritis and some forms of ulcers are caused by excessive stress and are, thus, diseases of adaptation. He concludes that "stress is a part of life... a natural by-product of all our activities" (Selye, 1952, p. 299).
Stress as Life Change Events

Another way of viewing stress is to conceptualize it as an environmental event or situation to which the person must adapt. Such an approach is exemplified by the work of Holmes and his colleagues (1967), who have done research relating life change events to the occurrence of disease. Life events (i.e., death of a spouse, divorce, marriage, pregnancy) were scaled according to the amount of readjustment they were judged to require. Social readjustment was defined to include "the amount and duration of change in one's accustomed pattern of life resulting from various life events, regardless of the desirability of the events" (Moos, 1976, p. 12). This research revealed a direct relationship between the magnitude of the life crisis and the risk of health change. These researchers have concluded that "the greater the magnitude of life change, the greater the risk of illness and, furthermore, the greater the seriousness of the chronic illness" (Masuda and Holmes, 1978, p. 236).

Stress as a Relational Phenomenon

Another approach to the study of stress exemplified by the work of Richard Lazarus (1966) is to perceive stress as a relational phenomenon. Lazarus views stress as a general rubric rather than as a precisely defined single process. The term stress encompasses any event in which environmental or internal demands "tax or exceed the adap-
tive resources of an individual, social system or tissue system" (Lazarus, 1966, p. 36). This cognitive-phenomenological approach conceptualizes stress as an ongoing transaction, a dynamic interrelationship between an individual and the environment. It is emphasized in this model that cognitive appraisal and coping should be recognized as part of a dynamic process whereby the individual continuously appraises the transaction.

Lazarus and Launier (1978), advocates of this view of stress, perceive the individual as bringing to this transaction several factors: personality characteristics, dynamic organismic factors, and a belief system. Each of these factors affects the manner in which an event is appraised. Thus, Lazarus and Launier emphasize the individual's active role in appraisal of events and in the shaping of future events. This transactional view considers humans as active rather than passive respondents to environmental events, leading Lazarus and Launier to assert that one "cannot sensibly consider the stress response as solely dependent on events external to the person" (Lazarus and Launier).

If then, internal events are also relevant in a study of stress, cognitive appraisal processes, the mental process of placing any event in one of a series of evaluative categories, are essential to transactional theoretical formulations of stress.
Cognitive appraisal processes are perceived by Lazarus and Launier as consisting of three types: primary appraisals, secondary appraisals, and reappraisals. Primary appraisals refer to the individual's well-being and may be classified as either irrelevant, meaning that such an event has no implication for well-being at the present time; benign-positive, meaning that an event is perceived as signifying "security or a positive state of affairs" and requiring no adapting or coping effort; or stressful appraisals in which a negative assessment is made regarding one's present or future state of well-being. Specifically, stressful appraisals are of three types: harm-loss, which has to do with damage that has already occurred; threat, which concerns anticipated harm or loss; and challenge, which has to do with potential mastery or gain and which has, generally speaking, a positive tone.

Secondary appraisals relate to the individual's coping resources and options and may mitigate or enhance threat or a sense of harm. It should be noted that the term "secondary" does not imply that it necessarily follows primary appraisal, for cognitions about coping alternatives and resources may occur before primary appraisal. Furthermore, because secondary appraisals are oriented toward potential coping resources, they do influence primary appraisal. The individual's perception of available coping resources and options is a critical cognitive factor in
the production of a psychological stress response. An individual is not as likely to appraise an event as stressful if it is perceived that adequate coping resources and options are available with which to master the potential harm-loss, threat or challenge. Secondary appraisals may reinforce threat, may give the individual hope, may increase belief in the existence of a supportive friend, may result in a judgment of minimal threat, or may result in anger rather than in depression or anxiety.

Lazarus and Launier point out two types of reappraisals, one dealing mainly with feedback from changing transactions in the environment and one which is used as a defensive measure. This first kind of reappraisal requires that the appraisal process be dynamic and flexible, rendering the person capable of adjusting to new and different situations. This ability to re-evaluate responses to stress from time to time appears fundamental to effective coping with complex and changing environments. This particular style or response is, according to Lazarus and others (1966), determined by a cognitive system consisting of relatively stable characteristics. However, it is not known at this time the extent to which effective coping is situation-specific, or the extent to which it is best considered a trait.

The second type of reappraisal, defensive reappraisal, is called into use as a means of coping. When perceiving a threatening event, the individual employs defense
mechanisms such as denial, intellectualization or reaction formation in an attempt to become psychologically detached from the threat.

Since this cognitive reappraisal permits an assessment of an originally appraised threat as non-threatening, it results in self-deception which may ultimately prove to be non-adaptive because the person may deny the existence of harmful stimuli. For example, a woman who had discovered a lump in her breast may defensively reappraise the threat it poses by perceiving it as benign until it actually becomes life-threatening.

Lazarus asserts that "the nature and adequacy of all three appraisal processes...determine the extent to which coping is flexible, rational, and effective, or rigid, irrational, and ineffective in meeting the threat or challenge" (Lazarus, Averill, and Opton, 1974, p. 264). According to Lazarus and Launier, "Coping consists of efforts, both action-oriented and intrapsychic, to manage (i.e., master, tolerate, reduce, minimize) environmental and internal demands, and conflicts among them, which tax or exceed a person's resources". An individual's choice regarding the particular mode of coping is dependent upon the degree of uncertainty, the degree of threat, the presence of conflict, and the degree of helplessness or sense of perceived vulnerability.

In suggesting that "we all maintain our sense of self-
respect and energy for action through perceptions that enhance our self-importance and self-esteem, and we maintain our sanity by suppressing the tremendous vulnerability we all experience in relation to the risks of the real world", David Mechanic (1974, p. 37) emphasizes the necessity to maintain self-esteem in stressful circumstances.

Lazarus believes that people select the environments to which they must respond and that they shape their commerce with them (Monat and Lazarus, 1977). Consistent with this is his emphasis on the individual as an active agent in appraising an event and in determining the available coping resources. The focus, then, is on the individual rather than on the environmental contingencies manipulating the individual's behavior. These environmental contingencies do, however, interact with personality structures such as attitudes, beliefs, motives and capacities in shaping each coping effort.

The way in which an individual goes about appraising events may be influenced by the relevance of an event to the individual's welfare and by ecological variables such as the physical environment, the social environment, population characteristics, and the particular adaptive problem (Lazarus, 1974, p. 285). Individuals confronted with a threatening situation are likely to select a mode of coping endorsed by the significant social groups or systems with which they are involved because the coping response
chosen may have significant consequences for their welfare over and above the original threat. It is also quite possible that the individuals may have internalized social values which influence and shape their appraisals as aspects of their own personalities.

Strategies for Coping with Stress

Coping strategies have been classified according to the mode employed: direct action, action inhibition, information search, or intrapsychic; and according to the function they serve: problem-oriented vs. palliative regulation of the emotional response (Roskies and Lazarus, 1979). It is important to note that intrapsychic modes can be implemented for the purpose of problem-solving as well as palliation. Cognitive behavior therapists have demonstrated that changes (via cognitive relabelling) in an individual's perceptions and feelings regarding a particular situation can serve as an adequate and valuable form of problem-solving (Roskies and Lazarus, 1979).

Ellis's Rational-Emotive-Therapy presents as its major premise that individuals are "disturbed not by things, but by the views they take of them" (Mahoney, 1974, p. 170). It is assumed that individuals label emotional responses as a result of conscious and unconscious evaluations, interpretations, and philosophies. Thus, according to these cognitive theorists, maladaptive feelings stem from maladaptive thought.
Intrapsychic efforts at regulation of stressful emotion may be a prerequisite to the employment of task-oriented problem-solving measures. A combination of intrapsychic action (cognitive relabelling) and direct action (behavior rehearsal) has been found very fruitful in facilitating effective coping (Roskies and Lazarus, 1977).

Although serious effort has been directed toward classifying coping strategies, at the present time little is known regarding the development of coping resources or the process whereby coping resources are transformed into specific coping processes. Lazarus and his colleagues (Folkman, et. al.) have established categories of coping resources, some of which can be found within the person, (health/energy, morale, problem-solving skills, belief system) and others which can be found in an accommodating environment (social support, material resources).

While Roskies and Lazarus suggest that possession of a coping resource minimizes the number of transactions assessed as stressful or the intensity of distress experienced, there exists no certain relation or correspondence between the level of resources and incentive and persistence in coping. According to Murphy, a basic requirement of resilience is "the capacity to mobilize resources under stress, to be strained and yet still be able to pull up extra energy" (Coelho, et. al., 1974, p. 95).

In addition to the mode of coping employed, it is
important to consider the adequacy of the coping behavior. In an attempt to evaluate such behavior, Folkman (Roskies and Lazarus, 1977) has suggested classifying coping behavior not only in terms of the effectiveness with which a task is accomplished, but also according to: (a) the physiological cost of harmful disturbance in bodily homeostasis and (b) the psychic cost of violation of value integrity. Maintaining value integrity is an aspect of coping behavior that warrants further consideration. Visotsky and his colleagues describe functional coping as "that which not only lessens the immediate impact of stress, but also allows the person to maintain some sense of self-worth and unity with the past and future, some overall meaning on which a person can count" (Roskies and Lazarus, 1979). Thus, coping or adaptation can be considered as a striving toward an acceptable compromise, necessitating neither total triumph over the environment or total surrender to it (Coelho, 1974).

The value an individual ascribes to a particular strategy of coping has important implications regarding the range of available coping behaviors. Because coping strategies correspond to standards of appropriate behavior or normative behavior, individuals are limited, to the extent that they endorse or conform to such standards, in their coping options.

In addition to recognizing the implications of the values assigned to various modes of coping, it is useful to
consider the ramifications of the individual's assessment of competency of coping responses. In his discussion of self-efficacy, Bandura (1977) asserts that the initiation and persistence of coping behaviors is affected by the individual's expectations of personal mastery. Whether an individual even tries to cope with a given situation is affected by the strength of conviction regarding the effectiveness of coping. Bandura posits that it is at this level that "perceived self-efficacy influences choice of behavioral settings". He contends that people fear and tend to avoid threatening situations they believe exceed their coping skills, whereas they get involved in activities and behave assuredly when they judge themselves capable of handling situations that would otherwise be intimidating. He concludes that "those who cease their coping efforts prematurely will retain their self-debilitating expectations and fears for a long time" (Bandura, 1977, pp. 193-194). A study done by Farley and Mealieau (1972) supported the hypothesis that persons who believe they exert little control over their own destiny experience greater generalized fear of potentially threatening objects, persons and events than persons believing that destiny lay in their control.

Locus of Control in Management of Stress

Julian B. Rotter, an advocate of Social Learning Theory, has discussed the importance of individuals'
expectations concerning their sense of competency or mastery (1954). Like Lazarus, Rotter is investigating the interaction of the individual and the environment. Personality is viewed as a set of potentials for responding rather than a static package of internal characteristics. Rotter, in placing considerable emphasis on temporal qualities or experience, regards an individual's behavior in the present as influenced or shaped by events experienced in the past (Rotter, 1972). Central to Rotter's orientation is the premise that behavior is goal-directed and guided by the expectancy held by the individual regarding a negative or positive reinforcement (1975). Expectancy is defined as the probability held by the individual that a particular reinforcement will occur as a function of a specific behavior on the individual's part in a specific situation. Whether or not a behavior is generated is dependent on the perceived nature and importance of the reinforcement that the individual desires, together with the individual's expectations of attaining the goal.

Locus of control, consisting of a belief on the part of the individual about whether reinforcement is controlled internally or externally, is considered to wield powerful influence on an individual's behavior (1972). Individuals are considered to have a belief in internal locus of control when a reinforcement is perceived as following some action of their own and being entirely contingent upon their
action. Thus, persons ascribing to an internal locus perceive themselves as active determiners of their fate, and they perceive a causal relationship between their behavior and the resultant reinforcement. Individuals believing in external control of reinforcement perceive a reinforcement as occurring as a result of luck, chance, fate and as under the control of powerful others or as unpredictable due to the complexity of forces existing in the environment.

Rotter suggests that there are considerable individual differences in the consistency with which people identify with either internal or external locus of control. For example, though an external locus of control may be utilized by some as a defense against expected failures, such persons may express belief in an internal locus when they are involved in competitive situations in which they expect to succeed.

We have seen, then, that the individual's capacity for coping with stress seems to be related to perceptions of coping resources. One other crucial aspect of coping resources involves those factors which fall under the general rubric of social support.

Social Support

As defined by Sarason (Note 1), social support is characterized by an individual's experiencing both social acceptance and social association or a feeling of member-
ship. It is the individual's perception that, should the need for support arise, assistance, (whether it be extra supplies of money, materials, tools, skills and cognitive guidance to improve the managing of the situation) is certain to be available. Coelho and his colleagues suggest that adequacy of coping is substantially dependent on "support, guidance and facilitation of significant other people and society at large" (1974, p. 412). Among the ingredients of social support, acceptance of the individual is especially important. Given the assumption that a perception of acceptance by one's peers facilitates a greater degree of self-disclosure, social support systems afford the individual an opportunity to lessen the stress factors typically experienced outside of such a system of support. According to Sidney Jourard (1971), concealers, people who share little of their personal experience with others, increase the stress factors in their lives and become susceptible to both physical and psychological illnesses. Jourard posits that

the lack of transparency is the major element of the 'psychopathology of the average' that affects the so-called 'normal' personality of our times. The more desperate the need to conceal, the greater the stress, and the more likely the occurrence of physical and psychological decompensation (1971, p. 41).
According to Gerald Caplan (1976), support systems imply "an enduring pattern of continuous or intermittent ties that play a significant part in maintaining the psychological and physical integrity of the individual over time (p. 41). The attachments that exist among individuals in a support system serve to facilitate effective coping with short-term crises, life transitions and long-term challenges. These attachments facilitate coping by (a) promoting emotional mastery, (b) offering guidance concerning relevant forces involved in predictable problems and strategies of dealing with them, and (c) providing feedback about an individual's behavior that affirms and validates personal identity. This validation of identity is likely to foster improved performance based on adequate self-evaluation. Caplan (1976) expands on this point by asserting that

the characteristic attribute of these social aggregates (continuing interactions with another individual, a network, a group or an organization) that acts as a buffer against disease is that in such relationships the person is dealt with as a unique individual (p. 19).

According to recent research, the positive social support that a cooperative environment offers facilitates "good health and morale, particularly in times of crisis" (Roskies and Lazarus, 1979).
Thus, it can be said that social support permits the individual to experience a sense of acceptance and belonging which in turn permit disclosure to occur. And it is in the disclosing of personal experience that the person can find help in reducing stress and in maintaining effective coping mechanisms.

A recently developed context for the disclosing of personal experience has been the consciousness-raising group. J. Mitchell (1973) defines consciousness-raising as "the process of transforming the hidden, individual fears of women into a shared awareness of the meaning of them as social problems, the release of anger, anxiety, the struggle of proclaiming the painful and transforming it into the political" (p. 61). Allen (Nassi and Abramowitz, 1978) suggests that the consciousness-raising group permits the disclosure of inner feelings and personal experience which, typically, encourages an atmosphere of trust facilitating the recognition of similar experiences and feelings.

Nassi and Abramowitz (1978) assert that "all women's groups, whether therapy or liberation groups, can break the isolation of women from each other and provide new role models and avenues for self-definition" (p. 144). In short, Nassi and Abramowitz attribute positive changes to the consciousness-raising experience. Among these changes are more positive feelings towards one's self, an improved
self-image, higher self-esteem and more positive attitudes toward women. In addition, Kincaid (1977) has found that participants in consciousness-raising groups try to redefine themselves in terms of inner sources of identity rather than as daughters, wives, mothers or girlfriends.

Cheryl Parmely, in her study, "Behavioral and self-concept changes in adult women resulting from an assertive training program," found that women who participated in the assertive training reported themselves to be "significantly less modest, self-effacing, cooperative and over-conventional" after treatment (Parmely, 1979, p. 4592). In addition to these findings, the participants perceived themselves to be less docile and dependent, and instead, more socially competent.

Similarly, in his study "An examination of the relationship among assertiveness, manifest anxiety, and self-esteem," Roger Conaway found assertiveness positively correlated with high self-esteem (Conaway, 1979, pp. 3915-3916). Conaway contends that there exists a close relationship between effective interpersonal expression and positive feelings about the self.

The Purpose of this Study

It was the intent of this study to examine two major areas of interest: (a) the perception of stress and the coping strategies employed and (b) a social support system and its impact on both the perception of stress and coping.
The study involved forty-four women, ages twenty-five through forty-five, all of whom were enrolled at Moorpark College, a community college located in eastern Ventura County, California. All of the participants had been out of high school or college for a minimum of five years.

More specifically, this study was designed to determine the participants' perceptions of the coping resources with which they met such adaptive tasks as returning to school, dealing with divorce, widowhood, and the "empty nest syndrome". Assessment of individual perceptions of stress and coping was made through the use of specific questionnaires and self-assessments. Since the research suggests that effective coping is related to social support, it was assumed that the introduction of the opportunity to create and maintain a social support system would better equip these women to deal with stress. This social support system could facilitate the definition of values and goals and serve as the reference point from which they could evaluate themselves. In addition, a feeling of self-worth and of being needed by the support system could encourage the perception of greater self-esteem, a factor of critical importance to the implementation of coping strategies.

**Expected Results from this Study**

Six hypotheses were tested in this study. The first hypothesis was the prediction that women involved in each of the experimental groups would be both more problem-
focused and more emotion-focused in their coping behaviors as measured by Lazarus and Cohen's Ways of Coping Checklist (Note 2) than women who comprised the control group. The second hypothesis predicted that among the women in the experimental groups, scores on self-esteem as measured by Janis-Field's Feelings of Inadequacy Scale would be higher than scores of the control group. The third hypothesis predicted that women belonging to the experimental groups would have lower scores on Lazarus and Cohen's Hassles Scale (Note 3) than women belonging to the control group. The fourth hypothesis predicted that women comprising the experimental groups would score more in the direction of internal control on Rotter's Locus of Control of Reinforcement Inventory than would women in the control group. The fifth hypothesis was the prediction that the women in the experimental groups would score in the direction of greater uplifts as measured by Lazarus and Cohen's Uplifts Scale (Note 4) than the women in the control group. The sixth hypothesis predicted that the women in the experimental groups would indicate more positive attitudes toward women as measured by Spence, Helmreich and Stapp's Attitudes toward Women Scale than women in the control group.
METHOD

Subjects

The participants in this study were forty-four re-entry women between the ages of twenty-five and forth-five who were enrolled at Moorpark College. Their voluntary participation was solicited by means of a brief talk which explained the general nature of the study and the possible advantages of participation, and which requested their involvement.

Measuring Instruments

The "Hassles Scale" developed by Lazarus and Cohen (1977), presents a variety of ways in which an individual can feel hassled. According to the authors of this scale, hassles are "irritants that can range from minor annoyances to fairly major pressures, problems or difficulties" (Lazarus and Cohen, 1978). The participants were instructed to indicate the hassles that had occurred to them in the past month and to rate those circled on two three-point scales of how persistent and severe each hassle had been. The scores on the two scales were added resulting in a total hassles score.

The "Ways of Coping Checklist (Lazarus and Cohen, 1978) is designed to determine the kinds of situations that inconvenience people in their daily lives, and how they cope with them. The participant was asked to give a detailed description of the most stressful event of the
past month. A "stressful event" is defined as a situation experienced as difficult or troubling, either because the participant felt bad as a result of the event, or because dealing with it required effort.

Sixty-eight items concerning possible ways of coping with a stressful event follow the subject's description of her most stressful event of the past month. The participant is asked to respond to these items as they might apply to the event she has described. In scoring the questionnaire, each of the sixty-eight items can be classified according to its focus (problem focus or emotion focus). Thus the individual has two scores, with the higher scores representing the greater the number of coping mechanisms available to her.

The "Uplifts Scale", developed by Lazarus and Cohen (1977) asks participants to indicate the uplifts or "events that make you feel good" they have experienced in the past month. These uplifts are rated by the participants as to how often each of the uplifts has occurred in the past month and how strongly they felt about each of the events. Scores on how often the uplift occurred and how strongly it was perceived are added together, giving a total uplifts score.

The revised Janis-Field's "Feelings of Inadequacy Scale" (1967) was employed to measure self-esteem. The Feelings of Inadequacy Scale is a twenty-item questionnaire
which asks the participants to rate themselves on a five-point scale (with one being Very Often and five being Almost Never) to questions such as "How often did you feel sure of yourself when among strangers?". In her 1969 study, Eagly found a split-half reliability of .88. In a study by Hamilton (1971), a correlation of .67 was found with the California Psychological Inventory Esteem Scale.

The short version of the "Attitudes toward Women Scale" (ATW) developed by Spence, Helmreich, and Stapp (1973) was given to the participants. This scale measures attitudes regarding the rights and roles of women in vocational, educational and intellectual activities, dating behavior and etiquette, sexual behavior and marital relationships. The numerical index score obtained for each participant in a given group reflects the extent to which she holds traditional or liberal views, and permits predictions of other behaviors (Spence et. al., 1973). Comparisons made between scores on the total Attitudes toward Women Scale and the short form using a student population found a correlation of .969 for females.

J. B. Rotter's "Locus of Control of Reinforcement Inventory" (1966) is a twenty-nine item, forced-choice test considered to be a measure of an individual's belief in either internal or external locus of control of reinforcement. In testing several populations over one to two month periods, Rotter (1966) found moderate to strong test-retest
reliabilities—coefficients between .49 and .83.

**Procedure**

The sequence of events for this five-month study was as follows:

1. **September 10 through 14, 1979:** The experimenter spoke to female students in a variety of classes describing the study in general terms and requesting their participation. Individuals who chose to take part in the study filled out a sheet giving such information as their name, address, birth date, number of years out of school, times available for participation in the study, and telephone number. The message is given in Appendix A.

2. **September 17 through 21, 1979:** The experimenter contacted by telephone the participants and arranged meetings for the four groups. Using the availability of time as the variable for assignment, thirty-four of the women were chosen for active participation in the study. There were three different experimental groups, each one participating in a different set of activities. Group I was a Consciousness-Raising group with additional emphasis placed on the supportive nature of the group. Group II consisted of Assertiveness-Training with considerable attention given to the supportive aspects of the group. Group III was a Rap group with no specific topics scheduled. Group IV consisted of ten women who received no experimental
treatment but took a battery of instruments at the conclusion of the experiment as did the other participants. It was assumed that by virtue of responding to the various questionnaires, the control group would benefit from the experience and gain some insight into their stresses, their coping styles and other aspects of their personality and behavior.

3. The three experimental groups met for one hour each week for a total of nine weeks. Group I covered such topics as sex-role stereotyping, women and the media, female sexuality, dating, marriage, marriage-career conflict, and birth control. Group II read and discussed Phelps and Austin's book *The Assertive Woman* (1974). The members of this group had weekly opportunities to practice their assertive skills. Group III was designed to cover whatever topics the women chose. The emphasis was on self-disclosure, and the building of supportive relationships within the group.

4. After nine weeks had elapsed, the experimenter administered the following scales to the three experimental groups and the control group: the Hassles Scale; the Ways of Coping Checklist; the Uplifts Scale; the revised Janis-Field's Feelings of Inadequacy Scale; the Attitudes toward Women Scale; and J. B. Rotter's Locus of Control of Reinforcement Inventory.

5. The experimental groups met for the last time with the facilitator and discussed their feelings about
their group experience as well as any changes that took place in the division of labor at home or changes in plans regarding further education or career goals.

Analysis of the Data

To test the hypotheses that women who were engaged in a social support system (i.e., who engaged in a Consciousness-Raising group, an Assertiveness-Training group, or a Rap group) would score higher on the Ways of Coping Checklist, higher on self-esteem, lower on the Hassles Scale, more internal on the Locus of Control of Reinforcement Inventory, higher on the Uplifts Scale, and less traditional on the Attitudes toward Women Scale, seven one-way between-subjects analyses of variance were performed, each with four levels: Consciousness-Raising and social support; Assertiveness-Training and social support; and a Rap group and social support; and a no treatment Control group.
RESULTS

Of the ninety-one participants who signed up for the study, forty-four completed the study, resulting in an uneven number of participants in each group. The final statistical analysis consisted of ten participants in Group I, the Consciousness-Raising group, thirteen participants in Group II, the Assertiveness-Training group, ten participants in Group III, the Rap group, and eleven participants in Group IV, the Control group.

Group means for the six dependent measures are presented in Table 1.

Analyses of variance were performed on each dependent variable in order to evaluate the research hypotheses. Summary tables for these analyses are shown in Tables 2 through 8.

The first analysis of variance performed compared the scores of each of the four groups on Lazarus and Cohen's Hassles Scale. There was no reliable difference among the four groups, $F(3, 40) = 2.38$, $p > .05$. The hypothesis predicting that women belonging to the experimental groups would have lower scores on the Hassles Scale than women belonging to the control group was not supported.

The second analysis of variance performed compared the scores of each of the four groups on J. B. Rotter's Locus of Control of Reinforcement Inventory. There was no reliable difference among the four groups, $F(3, 40) = 1.886$,
p.>.05. The hypothesis predicting that women in the experimental groups would score more in the direction of internal control than would women in the control group was not supported.

The third analysis of variance performed compared the scores of each of the four groups on Spence, Helmreich, and Stapp's Attitudes toward Women Scale. There was no reliable difference among the four groups, $F(3,40)=1.887$, p.>.05. The hypothesis predicting that the women in the experimental groups would indicate more positive attitudes toward women than women in the control group was not supported.

The fourth analysis of variance performed compared the scores of each of the four groups on Lazarus and Cohen's Uplifts Scale. There was no reliable difference among the four groups, $F(3,40)=0.098$, p.>.05. The hypothesis predicting that women in the experimental groups would score in the direction of greater uplifts than women in the control group was not supported.

The fifth analysis of variance performed compared the scores of each of the four groups on Janis-Field's Feelings of Inadequacy Scale. There was no reliable difference among the four groups, $F(3,40)=0.95$, p.>.05. The hypothesis predicting that women in the experimental groups would score higher on measures of self-esteem than would women in the control group was not supported.
The sixth analysis of variance performed compared the scores of each of the four groups on Lazarus and Cohen's Ways of Coping Checklist. There was no reliable difference among the four groups on either the problem focus, $F(3,40) = 1.22, p > .05$, or the emotion focus, $F(3,40) = 1.25, p > .05$. The hypothesis predicting that women involved in the experimental groups would report more different ways of coping was not supported.
Table 1

Mean Scores for Participants on Lazarus and Cohen's Hassles Scale, J. B. Rotter's Locus of Control of Reinforcement Inventory, Spence, Helmreich, and Stapp's Attitudes toward Women Scale, Lazarus and Cohen's Uplifts Scale, Janis-Field's Feelings of Inadequacy Scale, and Lazarus and Cohen's Ways of Coping Checklist.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Hassles</th>
<th>Locus of Control</th>
<th>Attitudes toward Women</th>
<th>Uplifts</th>
<th>Feelings of Inadequacy</th>
<th>Ways of Coping (P)*</th>
<th>Ways of Coping (E)**</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group I</td>
<td>138.6</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>67.3</td>
<td>304.5</td>
<td>134.0</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>15.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group II</td>
<td>81.3</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>68.2</td>
<td>283.3</td>
<td>141.0</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>16.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Group III</td>
<td>141.6</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>65.1</td>
<td>267.3</td>
<td>135.2</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>16.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group IV</td>
<td>137.0</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>56.6</td>
<td>269.4</td>
<td>134.5</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Problem-focused coping behavior

** Emotion-focused coping behavior
Table 2

ANOVA Summary Table for Scores on J. B. Rotter's Locus of Control of Reinforcement Inventory.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Subjects</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>72.66</td>
<td>24.22</td>
<td>1.886</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Subjects</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>513.78</td>
<td>12.84</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>586.44</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Table 3

ANOVA Summary Table for Scores on Lazarus and Cohen's Hassles Scale.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>SS</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Subjects</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>30517.10</td>
<td>10172.36</td>
<td>2.3805</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Subjects</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>170921.88</td>
<td>4273.04</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>201438.98</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4

ANOVA Summary Table for Scores on Spence, Helmreich, and Stapp's Attitudes toward Women Scale.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
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<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Subjects</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>942.78</td>
<td>314.26</td>
<td>1.887</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Subjects</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>6659.86</td>
<td>166.49</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>7602.64</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5

ANOVA Summary Table for Scores on Lazarus and Cohen's Uplifts Scale.

<table>
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<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Subjects</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8934.88</td>
<td>2978.29</td>
<td>0.098</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Subjects</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>1204024.10</td>
<td>30100.60</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>1212958.98</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6

ANOVA Summary Table for Scores on Lazarus and Cohen's Ways of Coping Checklist - Problem Focus.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Subjects</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>69.07</td>
<td>23.02</td>
<td>1.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Subjects</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>752.82</td>
<td>18.82</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>821.89</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Table 7

ANOVA Summary Table for Scores on Lazarus and Cohen's Ways of Coping Checklist - Emotion Focus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Subjects</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>126.24</td>
<td>42.08</td>
<td>1.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Subjects</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>1341.40</td>
<td>33.53</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>1467.64</td>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Table 8

ANOVA Summary Table for Scores on Janis-Field's Feelings of Inadequacy Scale.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Subjects</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>384.65</td>
<td>128.21</td>
<td>0.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Subjects</td>
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<td>5376.33</td>
<td>134.40</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>5760.98</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
DISCUSSION

It was observed throughout this study that the participants' commitment to the group sessions frequently was difficult to maintain given other responsibilities such as school and the family. It may be that the problem of attrition, possibly a result of ambivalent commitment, was one of the major factors that accounts for the lack of statistically significant support for any of the six hypotheses. There may have existed from the very outset of the study some ambivalence regarding serious personal involvement. By its very nature, the experience of disclosure, coupled with the anxiety-provoking process of clarifying needed changes, would accentuate such ambivalence. In addition to the potential ambivalence, the variability in motivation of the participants to take an active part in the group experience should be given attention. For example, one participant may have volunteered for the study due to curiosity, while another may have volunteered due to therapeutic expectations associated with group experiences.

Despite the fact that the mean differences among the groups are intriguing, there is little question but that the amount of variability within each of the groups was so great as to obscure the differences between the means. Therefore, we must address ourselves to the question of how we can design a study which will produce statistically
significant results.

In future research, it seems important to insure equivalence of the groups prior to the experiment by means of true random assignment or matching on the basis of relevant personality variables such as age or marital status. The development of situations which can minimize attrition should also be taken into consideration.

Additionally, behavioral measures which would more sensitively record the changes made by participants should be included. Such measures could include video tapes made before and after involvement in the groups, self-report inventories specifically designed to measure changes, and behavioral reports of changes made by intimates of the participants.

Had the study continued longer than the nine-week period, an effect of the experimental treatment might have been apparent. It would appear that the length of time of the study was not sufficient to effect significant and lasting cognitive or behavioral changes with regard to coping with stress.

In addition to a potentially inadequate amount of time spent in the experimental environment, the fact that there was only one group of each type meant that the number of participants was not large enough to compensate for the random variability within the groups. More groups per condition together with an appreciably lower attrition
rate would likely increase the possibility of obtaining statistically reliable results. The introduction of more than one leader assigned at random might further contribute to the gathering of statistically reliable results.
REFERENCES


Lazarus, R. S. *Psychological stress and the coping process*. 


Phares, E. J. *Locus of control: A personality determinant of behavior*. Morristown, New Jersey: General Learning


Simon, S. B., Howe, L. W., & Kirschenbaum, H. Values


REFERENCE NOTES


APPENDIX A

Hello. My name is Robyn Otto and I am a graduate student in Psychology at Cal. State University at Northridge. I am doing a research project and am looking for women volunteers. Your participation, should you choose to volunteer, would consist of attending group meetings throughout part of this semester and exploring your feelings and thoughts regarding a variety of topics. Also, there will be a series of questionnaires that you will respond to. I would like to encourage the women here to take part in this project for I think there are many advantages in it for you in terms of personal growth.

Those of you who are interested in joining this study, please fill out the sheet that is being passed around. This sheet asks for information such as your name, address, telephone number, age, years you've been out of school before coming to Moorpark College, and the times you'd be available for participating in the study. I will contact each of you who volunteer and will arrange a meeting during which I will explain in greater detail the nature of the study and answer any questions you may have. Thank you very much.